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# Obituaries

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## THE END OF THE TRIUMVIRATE

*Mary Louise Marshall, 1893–1986*

With the death of Mary Louise Marshall (Mrs. Jack Hutton) in New Orleans on January 25, 1986, came the end of the Medical Library Association's *grande dames* of the mid-20th century. Eileen Cunningham, Janet Doe, and Mary Louise Marshall constituted a triumvirate that brought about so many fundamental changes in medical libraries and librarianship that all who work in this field now are legatees of this unusual group, whether they realize it or not. And at the death of the last of them, it seems appropriate to examine some of the things they accomplished in their time. However, one must not assume that these three outstanding women were all of one mold; indeed, three more

distinct personalities, operating in three more distinct ways, could hardly be imagined.

Mary Louise Marshall, the oldest of the three, was born in Illinois in 1893. She attended Illinois Women's College and Southern Illinois Normal University for two years, then finished her education at the University of Wisconsin Library School. Her appreciation for college education lasted all her life; in the oral history interview she gave for the MLA archives, she emphasized how proud she was to be named Alumna of the Year by her school later in life. In the undifferentiated library world of the time around World War I, Mary Louise worked after graduation at the library of Southern Illinois Normal University and as head of cataloging at a public library, before going in 1919 to New Orleans to work at the American Library Association's War Library scheme for soldiers not yet discharged



Eileen Cunningham, Janet Doe, and Mary Louise Marshall at Centennial Anniversary of the Graduation of Elizabeth Blackwell, American Medical Women's Association, Chicago, 1949.  
Courtesy of Vanderbilt University Medical Center

from the armed forces. In that city she met and married Jack Hutton, and in that city she remained all the rest of her life.

When the ALA office in New Orleans was disbanded, Mary Louise Marshall became librarian first of the Orleans Parish Medical Library, the private library of the parish medical society, and then (after the union of that library with the Tulane University Medical Library) of Tulane University's Medical Library. This position she kept until her retirement in 1959.

During her period at Tulane, Mary Louise took part in many aspects of national and international medical librarianship. In the simpler days of our organization, with fewer members to do all the jobs that needed to be done, it was possible for a dedicated individual to run through the entire *cursum honorem* from lowly member of the least committee to president. Mary Louise Marshall's abilities and gracious manners saw to it that she did. As one who was privileged to go through her papers before an interview with her, I can testify that she grew and matured in these jobs. I particularly remember the awe she expressed in the notes she took at her first MLA meeting, in Washington, at which Fielding H. Garrison, his sister (acting as chaperone to the ladies present), and the librarians of such prestigious institutions as the New York Academy of Medicine, the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, and the Brooklyn Academy of Medicine were present. She had already become interested in history, and meeting Fielding H. Garrison was a particular delight.

Miss Marshall entered librarianship about World War I; she became the second woman elected president of the Medical Library Association during World War II, and because wartime conditions made annual society meetings impossible, she remained in office for almost six years. As one physician member put it to her: "You don't have a term; you have a sentence!" It is doubtful that Mary Louise felt that way about it; it gave her time to think and plan, and her later years in the association show her carrying out some of her special ideas about the field.

Perhaps she perceived that the most pressing need for medical librarianship was a well-trained, professionally oriented group. At the first MLA meeting after World War II, in New Haven, where for the first time more than 100 members attended, Miss Marshall stressed the importance of education and continuing education for medical librarians, and she appointed a committee to draw up means for such education. From that beginning

stemmed all of MLA's accreditation of library school courses, continuing education classes at the annual meetings, internships, publications for the librarian, and attempts to bring educational offerings to all the members everywhere. With Eileen Cunningham, Miss Marshall worked for the education of foreign medical librarians also, both by bringing foreign librarians to the United States for study and by sending Americans overseas. Indeed, immediately after her retirement from Tulane, Mary Louise Marshall went to Colombia, under State Department auspices, to help medical libraries there. Some of those she helped there remained in contact with her until her death.

Still in the field of education for medical librarians, Miss Marshall worked with Janet Doe on MLA's first two editions of the *Handbook of Medical Library Practice*. She wrote a chapter on classification schemes in the first edition and was coeditor of the second edition.

Each thing led to the next. Because of her work on classification, she was the logical person for the Army Medical Library (now the National Library of Medicine) to contact during its lengthy and often traumatic renaissance. Under her chairmanship, a distinguished committee of physicians, biomedical scientists, and librarians worked mightily to produce the first Army Medical Library classification scheme, which with some changes has been the NLM scheme ever since.

Because of her success with this endeavor, it was logical that when the first Board of Regents was set up under the legislation that transferred and transformed the Army Medical Library into the National Library of Medicine, Miss Marshall should be named its only medical librarian and the only woman on the board. Dr. Frank B. Rogers, then director of NLM, was to go to New Orleans to tell her he wished to suggest her name to President Eisenhower for this post, but for some reason he could not go. Instead, he asked me to find out whether Mary Louise would be willing to accept the post, and I remember my conversation with her vividly. I was staying in the guest room of Miss Marshall's charming house, which became my home whenever I went to New Orleans, and I sat on the bed and she sat on an easy chair as we went over some MLA business. When there was a lull in the conversation, I said that Brad Rogers had asked me to speak to her about a topic that couldn't be mentioned elsewhere until the official notification—until then the president could change his mind and not accept the recommendation.

The more I talked, the more confused my expla-

nation became, until finally she said, "What *are* you talking about?" So back I went, starting at the beginning, and finally I gave her a clearer idea of the situation. She was astounded, but very pleased and flattered, saying she thought Janet Doe might have been chosen. She served on the Board of Regents for a full four-year term, came faithfully to all the meetings, and did her homework carefully in between. I always enjoyed having her as a guest—we both liked to cook and to go to good restaurants. I always looked forward with curiosity to see what kind of a hat Mary Louise would have found *that* time to bring to the meetings!

I have mentioned Miss Marshall's interest in history. She was interested not only in general history but also in the history of medicine and in genealogy. She wrote *Medicine in the Confederacy, Plantation Medicine, Versatile Genius of Daniel Drake, Nurse Heroines of the Confederacy*, and a biography of Rudolph Matas, M.D. For many years she was national librarian, historian, and chairwoman of colonial research of the Colonial Dames—one of a number of organizations to which she belonged and which she served as an officer. She published a manual on colonial family names, and lectured and taught many courses on searching for ancestors until she was in her nineties.

Mary Louise Marshall last came to an MLA meeting in Washington, D.C., in 1980 with Nancy H. Keller, a long-time friend and colleague. At that time she had to use a wheelchair to get about, but she managed to go to almost every plenary session. A paper on early 20th-century medical librarians, including her, had just appeared in the *Journal of Library History* and reprints were available. A paper on the subject was read, and then there was a reception in her honor—at which more people showed up than expected and the refreshments could not be stretched! Between plenary sessions, Miss Marshall would disappear into the Archives of the Colonial Dames to do some research.

#### *Eileen R. Cunningham, 1894–1965*

Eileen Cunningham, was entirely dissimilar to Mary Louise Marshall; sadly, the two were not above quarrels and embarrassing interludes. Where Mary Louise's pleasant personality made one look less critically at her ideas, Eileen Cunningham's personality made one look less kindly at her ideas than they warranted. Reviewing all the things which Mrs. Cunningham accomplished—at home, through the World Health Organization, UNESCO, IFLA, international groups on scien-

tific abstracting and indexing, and through consultancies in Asia and Europe—one cannot but be impressed by her energy, by her selflessness, and by her sound, pragmatic ideas.

On the other hand she could irritate everyone without trying: she talked endlessly, and she thought your time should be her time. I remember the day when, as incoming president of the Medical Library Association, she asked me to edit the *Bulletin*. I was awakened about 6 A.M. from a sound sleep by a phone call from Mrs. Cunningham, who asked me to have breakfast with her in fifteen minutes. I protested; whereupon she said, "All right—in half an hour I'll meet you at the entrance to the Coffee Shop," and hung up. Sleepily dressing and wondering what it was all about, I remember I had trouble getting my clothes on correctly. But in half an hour, I was in the Coffee Shop with all my buttons matching their buttonholes, and being asked—directed, really—to become editor. (Incidentally, it was a ten-year stint I enjoyed hugely.)

Eileen Cunningham was privately educated, spoke a number of languages, had lived in many places, and had no feelings of superiority over "natives." She could live under spartan circumstances, and would not think it strange to go on a several-days tramp over the lower Himalayas with only a native guide to help her. She was thus one of America's best ambassadors—and I suspect there were a number of Americans who wished she might be that forever!

#### *Janet Doe, 1895–1985*

Janet Doe's obituary has just appeared in the April 1986 issue of this journal and need not be repeated here. Janet was the bridge and the catalyst for the other two in the triumvirate. She had a more complex mind, an intellectual breadth greater than either of the others, and a personality that made her universally beloved, listened to, and followed. Her personal modesty made her willing to give credit to others—sometimes not only for what Mary Louise and Eileen did, but for some things she herself had done. She was truly adviser and mentor for many years to the directors of the National Library of Medicine, the surgeons general under whom they worked, and the honorary consultants and other physicians with whom she came into contact. For Eileen Cunningham and Mary Louise Marshall she was (as someone said of Gandhi) the magic that allowed them to forget their individual needs and desires to work for the greater good of the profession they all loved.